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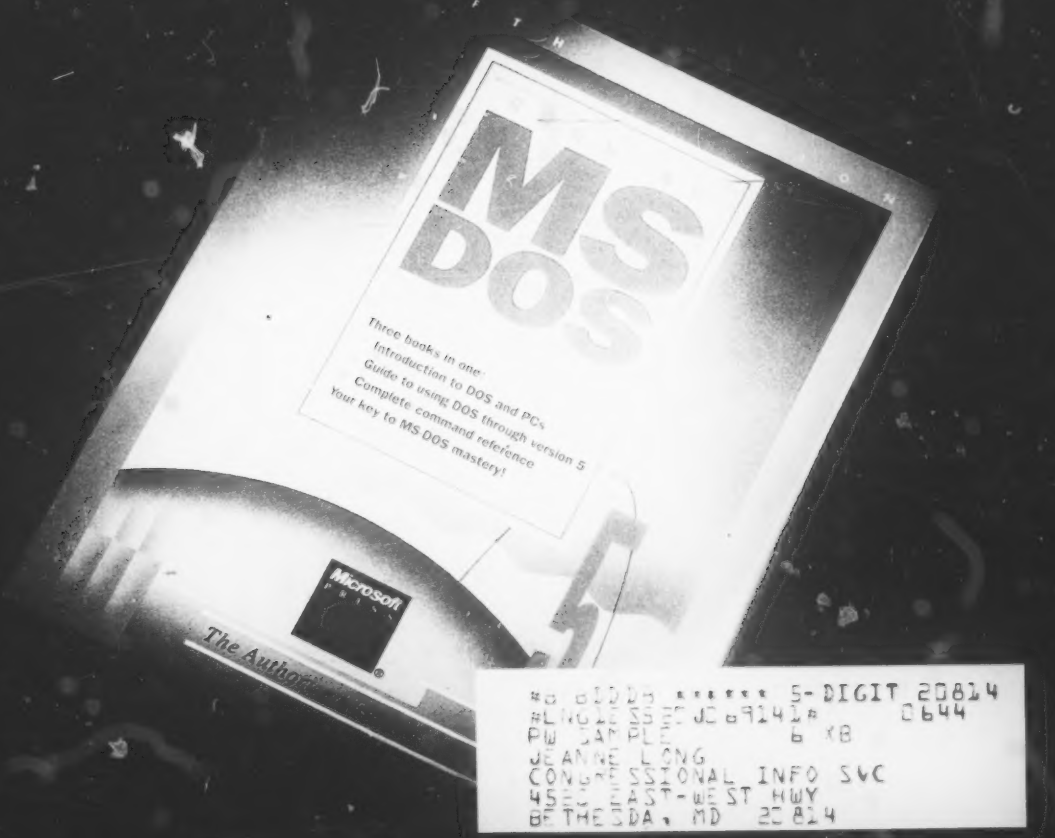

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EDITORS: JOANNE TANGORRA & JOHN ZINSSER

Videos in Bookstores Growing, 'PW' Survey Shows

The video market in bookstores and libraries is showing steady growth, according to a survey sponsored by *Publishers Weekly*, which recently released the findings of similar report on the audio market (see Audio / Video Plus, Sept. 6).

Among booksellers, the study sought to determine such factors as the percent of bookstores currently carrying videocassettes; the types of videocassettes carried and the number of titles carried within each category; bookstore sales of videocassettes in 1990; the percentage breakdown of video sales; types of children's videocassettes that bookstores carry and the number of titles carried within each category; selection process and information sources for video titles and releases.

According to *PW*'s findings, 30% of the booksellers surveyed carry videocassettes (36% of the larger and 25% of the smaller bookstores); of those, 42% said that their sales of videocassettes have increased over the past year. In addition, 49% reported that they maintain separate video sections and 43% cross-display videos with books.

Overall, booksellers indicated that 21% of their video sales are in theatrical videos (7% in foreign films) and 79% in special interest videos; half of their sales are generated from adult titles, half from children's.

In types and number of video titles carried, 72% carry children's product with an average of 23 titles; 29% carry documentary tapes with an average of 13 titles; 27% carry instructional and how-to videos with an average of 11 titles; and 21% stock exercise-related titles, averaging six titles. In addition, 19% of bookstores surveyed carry theatrical/popular titles with an average of 31 titles; 18% sell travel tapes, averaging 10 titles; and 16% stock theatrical/special interest videotapes, carrying an average of 19 titles.

Looking specifically at the children's category, one of the most popular for bookstores, the survey indicated that 63% of booksellers who carry children's video stock book tieins; 56% sell animated features (other than Disney); 49% carry activity videos (e.g., Wee Sing); 44% carry Disney tapes; 42% carry music videos; and 41% sell educational videos.

Bookstores purchase an average of 48% of their titles through wholesalers and 52% through publishers. In making their selections, 23% of the respondents indicated that subject area most influences the bulk of their video selections; 17% said customer requests most influence selections; and 11% indicated popularity of the titles as most important.

In general, booksellers see a promising future for video in their stores. Of the total respondents, 23% said that they plan to increase the amount of space they devote to videocassettes within the next 12 months by an average of 52%, or approximately 11 square feet (bookstores currently devote an average of 12 square feet to video, or about 2% of their total space). Moreover, 40% said they expect to increase the number of videocassettes carried over the next 12 months, with the greatest increase expected in the children's, music and instructional categories.

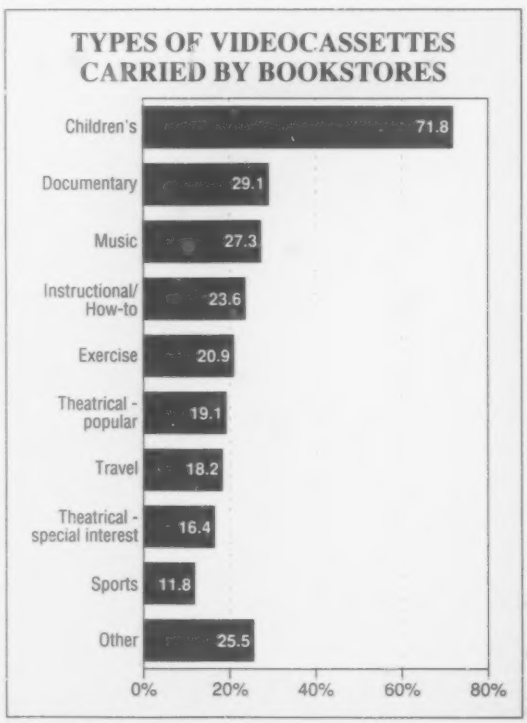
As for libraries, *PW* sought to determine the percentage of libraries that currently have video collections; library budgets for the purchase of videocassettes in this fiscal year and the change from the previous fiscal year; the percentage breakdown of video collections; types and number of children's titles carried; breakdown of video purchases; and selection criteria.

The findings of the survey reveal a healthy video market in libraries, with 84% of respondents indicating that their libraries have videocassette collections, averaging 988 titles. Expenditures on videocassettes in this fiscal year, however, dropped 9% from last year's average of $9675 to $8855. An average of 37% of titles carried by libraries are theatrical (4% are foreign films; 23% are independent films) and 63% are special-interest titles.

Of the total respondents, 84% said that their libraries have video sections; 70% catalogue their nonfiction videos; and 12% house specific video categories (such as how-to/instructional, children's tapes and documentaries) separately or interfile them with print material.

In breakdown by category of the libraries' special-interest video collections, children's tapes represent 29%; documentaries, 20%; instructional/how-to, 17%; travel, 9%; sports, 5%; music, 5%; and exercise titles, 5%.

In the children's category, the types of videocassettes most often carried are: animated features (other than Disney), 75%; Disney, 75%; educational, 71%; and book



tie-ins, 68%.

The libraries surveyed indicated that 67% of their acquisitions are made through wholesalers; 28% through publishers; 2% through retail outlets; and 3% through other sources. Of the total respondents, 58% said that more than one person is involved in video selections with the director (32%), librarian (14%) and AV librarian coordinator (11%) mentioned most often as the primary decision makers. As for selection criteria, subject area, price and patron requests dominate. Price (17%) was mentioned most often as influencing the bulk of video selection decisions.

Finally, regarding videocassette policies, libraries allow patrons to check out an average of four videos at a time; 14% charge patrons for loans, with most (84%) charging a fee of $1; and 45% allow patrons to reserve videocassettes. Of libraries surveyed, 67% use some type of security measure to prevent tape theft.

Poetry Magazine Debuts on Video

***Poet Richard Wilbur** appears in the first video issue of* Off the Page.

Primo Donna Productions, a full-service video production company based in Fairfield, N.J., has launched a new poetry video magazine called *Off the Page* featuring a combination of poems, poets, commentary and interpretation. Produced three times a year, each edition of the magazine will showcase poets performing and discussing their work as well as a segment called "Famous Poets: Famous Actors" in which well-known actors read the work of celebrated poets. In addition, other well-established and emerging contemporary poets will read.

Featured in the first issue are poets Amy Clampitt, Louis Simpson, Richard Howard, Cornelius Eady and Carolyn Forché and former Poet Laureate Richard Wilbur (filmed on location at his farm in Cummington, Mass., where he reads and comments on his work). Also in the premier issue actor Tony Randall presents poems from Ogden Nash's food series, with each piece performed in a different setting—including a kitchen. Forthcoming issues feature poems by Robert Frost, Maxine Kumin and Howard Nemerov performed by actors including Jason Robards, Barbara Feldon and Christopher Reeve.

Off the Page is something of a departure for Primo Donna Productions, a highly specialized video production company that started out producing instructional and commercial videos—mainly about sports—and branched out into other areas. Conceived by Primo Donna editor-in-chief Norman Rose, an actor and theater producer as well as poetry aficionado, the video magazine is the company's first direct-sale venture.

Off the Page is meant to appeal to a wide range of poetry buffs, according to Jerry Chait, vice-president of the company and executive producer of the video magazine. "We created *Off the Page* to capture the full emotion of poetry. It's a unique video experience that's both enriching and entertaining, empowering poetry to transcend the written word." Moreover, he adds, "Everything is done on location, and the performer and poet are always looking directly at the camera, so its very intimate. Viewers have the chance to meet and understand today's poets as well as to hear their personal thoughts." In the first issue, for example, Simpson and Forché discuss their work and careers as poets.

Chait sees the market for *Off the Page* as consisting of both individual poetry lovers—those who, for example, subscribe to literary journals—and institutions such as schools and libraries. "If we can get a series of videos into high school and university libraries, they could serve as an excellent instructional tool for teachers and students," he says. Bookstores with video sections are another potential market, he adds.

In the meantime *Off the Page* will be available on an annual subscription basis and marketed via a direct-mail and advertising campaign. The first issue is available for a special introductory price of $29.95. —J.T.

Roth Resigns as Head of Simon & Schuster Audio

Daniel Roth has resigned his post as publisher of Simon & Schuster Audio, joining HarperCollins as vice-president of market development. Seth Gershel, formerly director of sales and marketing for Simon & Shuster Audio, has been promoted to the position of vice-president and publisher of the audio division, reporting to Irwyn Applebaum, president and publisher of Pocket Books.

Gershel will oversee all facets of Simon & Schuster's spoken-word audio operations, including title acquisition, production, marketing and distribution.

In making the annoucement, Jack Romanos, president of the Simon & Schuster consumer group, commented: "Seth was a pioneer in spoken-word audio publishing and has been instrumental in establishing Simon & Schuster as the industry leader in this format. After four years with Simon & Schuster as director of sales and marketing, he is uniquely qualified to help us expand audio both in traditional and non tradiational markets," he added.

Gershel began his career in audio publishing in 1982 as director of sales for Caedmon, and has been with Simon & Shcuster since 1987. He is also the president of the Audio Publishers Association, an industry trade group he helped to establish four years ago.

According to Gershel, who says he's "thrilled" with his new position, "We've done a good job of helping to grow the audio business and we plan to keep pushing forward. We see a lot of growth coming up for the industry and we plan to continue to be one of the leaders."

Recent releases from Simon & Schuster Audio include *The Star Trek 25th Anniversary Collection* on compact disc and Tom Clancy's *The Sum of All Fears*. Backlist titles such as *The Silence of the Lambs* and *The Burden of Proof* continue to be bestsellers. —J.T.

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